



Washington State Department of Early Learning

Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)

Quarterly Meeting

November 5, 2009, 9 a.m. to noon

M i n u t e s

IN ATTENDANCE

Department of Early Learning (DEL) STAFF

Dr. Bette Hyde- Director

Sangree Froelicher-Acting Assistant Director, Family Partnerships Division; Presenting

Amy Blondin- Communications Manager; Acting DEL Staff to the Council

ELAC MEMBERS

Amber Havens - Educational Training Partners

Lorena Lowell- Child Care Center Director, ELAC Co-Chair

Jada Rupley - Associate Superintendent, ELAC Co-Chair

James Skucy - Executive Director, Benton Franklin Head Start

Nina Auerbach- Chief Executive Officer, Thrive by Five Washington

Leslie Goldstein- Executive Policy Advisor, Governor's Executive Policy Office

Paula Smith - Head of School, University Child Development School

Representative Roger Goodman - Washington State House of Representatives

Robin Higa- Parent

Sue Winn- Family Child Care Provider

Senator Curtis King - Washington State Senate

Todd McNerney- DEL Parent Advisory Group

Senator Claudia Kauffman - Washington State Senate

ELAC MEMBERS ABSENT

Ann Daley- Executive Director, Higher Education Coordinating Board

Susan Dreyfus- Secretary, Department of Social and Health Services

Charles Earl- Director, State Board for Community & Technical Colleges

Mary Seaton- Director of Early Learning, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Maria Vera- Early Learning Consultant

Peter Berliner- PRI Makers Network Managing Director, Philanthropy NW- Thrive By Five Washington

Dr. Maxine Hayes - State Health Officer, Dept. of Health

Dr. Ilene Schwartz- Children with Disabilities- University of Washington

Representative Larry Haler - Washington State House of Representatives

Marie Zackuse - Chairwoman, Tulalip Tribes of Washington

OVERALL PURPOSE

The purpose of the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) is for representatives from the state's early learning stakeholder communities to provide input and recommendations to the Department of Early Learning (DEL) so that DEL's strategies and actions are well-informed and are broadly supported by parents, early care providers, health/safety experts and interested parties. The Governor holds final authority for policy decisions..

TODAY'S INTENTIONS

- DEL to report out on progress of
 - Early Learning Plan and December 1st recommendations to the Governor and
 - The Professional Development Consortium.
- Hear public comment.
- Determine next steps.

WELCOME, OVERVIEW OF TODAY'S INTENTIONS, AGENDA REVIEW

Co-Chair Jada Rupley opened the meeting and reviewed the meeting purposes.

INTRODUCTIONS

Council members and audience members introduced themselves.

OPENING REMARKS FROM DIRECTOR BETTE HYDE

- Early Learning Plan (ELP) community outreach meetings are taking place throughout the state several of which are being sponsored by the League of Education Voters and others. DEL, Thrive by Five Washington, and OSPI are attempting to have representatives from at least 2 of the partner organizations present at each meeting. Themes from meetings so far:
 - The idea of universal pre-k is worrisome to some child care providers.
 - Focus on health and safety regulations for child care.
 - There is a lot of interest in subsidy reform.
 - Positive feedback concerning results of full day k.
 - Concerns about the affordability of child care.

Nina Auerbach emphasized the need to remember the importance of birth through 3 year olds as we move forward.

Bette, Sonali Patel, and Susan Dreyfus met yesterday to discuss potential improvements to the child care subsidy system that could be implemented without changes in laws or funding.

- Bette spoke about the Quality Education Council (QEC) meeting, which took place on the previous Tuesday. Bette shared with the QEC the status of the ELP and December 1st recommendations work. There was discussion at the meeting of whether or not to include 3 and 4 year olds in the definition of basic education. The group was split on this issue. There was also discussion about whether to prioritize pre-k vs. full day k.
- Surveys to gather feedback about the ELP as well as the Early Learning and Development Benchmarks are now posted on the DEL website.

DEL REPORT OUT/UPDATES

Amy Blondin provided an update on the status of the survey to gather feedback about the Early Learning and Development Benchmarks. The survey is available in English and Spanish and will be open until November 15th. So far DEL has received 350 responses to the English version and 6 to the Spanish version. Amy emphasized that DEL is working to get the word about this survey and asked anyone with outreach ideas to contact her.

At this time Leslie Goldstein provided an update about new Head Start slots in Washington. 202 additional slots have been granted to Washington through ARRA funds. She also mentioned that the Governor will soon be nominating a Head Start program to be eligible to become a Head Start Center of Excellence.

DEL REPORT OUT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONSORTIUM (PDC), EARLY LEARNING PLAN (ELP), AND THE DECEMBER 1ST RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNOR

PDC-

Agda Burchard, executive director of the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children, provided a brief background of the work of the PDC and shared a letter from the PDC to the ELP Steering Committee and the December 1st Drafting Team. She emphasized the importance of including the need for a well qualified and well compensated workforce in the ELP and that state policies and financing of the ELP system will have a significant impact on this workforce. Agda raised several issues that the PDC is looking at:

- The need for a truly integrated system
- Access
- Financing
- The need for a system that includes people working with children up to age 12 to align with licensing requirements.

The short term recommendations of the PDC relate to financing the continued work of the PDC and financing the implementation of the December 1st recommendations. The PDC is asking for “place holders” in the ELP regarding professional development so that information can be added once the work of the PDC is further along. Agda also explained that the PDC has adopted the NAEYC blueprint as a guiding document and that they are using the 6 policy areas for creating an effective professional development system as well as the guiding principles in that document as key elements of the long term plan of the PDC.

Council Discussion

- Jada Rupley asked if feedback from the field was a part of the plan. Agda explained that she and Joel Ryan of the Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP are heading a workgroup dedicated to communication and outreach and that they are working on developing strategies and timing for stakeholder feedback within the PDC timeline.
- Robin Higa expressed concern that there was not specific mention of access for non-English speaking providers and emphasized that clear intentionality is important. Agda explained that this issue is currently being addressed via the diversity, inclusion, and access principle and that it has been a regular part of group discussions. Robin recommended outlining this issue more explicitly.
 - Senator Kauffman expressed similar concerns about the need to explicitly address the achievement gap and children with disabilities.

- Hannah Lidman of the Economic Opportunity Institute, a member of the PDC, spoke at this time, explaining that the current PDC document only addresses guidelines and overarching beliefs and that the actual recommendations of the PDC are not yet developed.
- Lorena Lowell spoke about the need to consider reciprocity between states as this work moves forward.

ELP-

John Howell, a consultant with Cedar River Group, asked the council for permission to bring the ELP Steering Committee work group chairs to the table for discussion, the council agreed. He explained that today's presentation would be a progress report and an opportunity to discuss the substance of the ELP but that an actual draft plan was not yet available. He spoke about the connection between the ELP and the December 1st Recommendations, explaining that the ELP work group chairs all sit on the Drafting Team and that the December 1st Recommendations are intended to be the first phase implementation of the ELP. The ELP is based upon a likely 5-10 year implementation period. The ELP group is preparing a draft by December 1st that aligns with the Recommendations.. The final version of the ELP will be complete in March 2010.

Child Health and Development Work Group-

Jill Sells, director of Reach Out and Read Washington, gave an overview of the work of the group. She spoke about their efforts to achieve meaningful collaboration by including people in the health community not generally included in these discussions. The work of this group started with the access to health insurance and medical home outcome in Kids Matter. The group suggested expanding this outcome to include other items such as nutrition, autism, Reach Out and Read, etc. - need to think at the system level. The group identified 7 strategies (see outcomes and strategies document).

Council Discussion

- Representative Goodman asked about whether this group spoke to the need for early screenings. Jill explained that the strategies identified by the group do call out developmental screenings. Need to look more closely at which screenings should and should not be universal and how to make it happen.
 - Senator Kauffman commented that we need to think about treatment capacity, not just the screenings.
- Robin Higa suggested use of the protective factors framework.

Social Emotional Development and Mental Health Work Group-

Tory Henderson of Department of Health gave an overview of the work of the group. She spoke about identifying what social emotional health means for p-3 in terms of all, some, and few:

- All children: Skills to build relationships needed to succeed in school and life such as impulse and anger control. Recognize as completely interconnected with learning; not separate.
- Some children: Identify children with risk factors provide interventions before issues become major problems.
- Few children: Provide access to mental health professionals for children experiencing serious emotional/mental health disturbances.

Early Care and Education Work Group-

Molly Boyajian of Thrive by Five Washington filled in for group lead Elizabeth Bonbright Thompson, executive director of the Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network. She gave an overview of the work of the group and spoke about the outcomes and strategies identified by the group (see outcomes and strategies document). The group prioritized quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), early literacy, universal pre-k, a P-20 longitudinal data system, home visiting, and professional development.

Council Discussion

- Representative Goodman spoke about the need to not push out experienced providers purely because they don't meet formal education requirements. He also spoke about the need to not allow ratings to turn into a class system of care where those who can afford to pay more go to higher rated facilities.
 - Sue Winn responded by emphasizing that these issues have been a part of the work of the PDC and that while the details haven't yet been worked out they are aware.
 - Nina Auerbach commented that a well-executed QRIS system starts with at-risk communities and provides strong supports and resources for providers to achieve high ratings.

Parent and Community Partnerships Work Group-

John Howell filled in for group lead Sarah Borgida of the Foundation for Early Learning. He explained that the basic premise of the group is that parents, families, and caregivers play a central role in the early learning system. The group started small and grew to include a diverse group composed of members from many different professions and perspectives. Some of the themes to come out of this group were:

- Parent voice shaping policy and the early learning system.
- Provide sufficient resources for parents and caregivers.
- Provide knowledge and skills to parents and caregivers.
- Community support for parents and caregivers.

Community Engagement Work Group-

Leslie Dozono explained that this is the non-policy oriented workgroup formerly known as the Diversity and Meaningful Engagement workgroup. She spoke about the two functions of this group:

- Look at equity issues in the plan.
- Engage communities that otherwise wouldn't hear about the plan; make sure opportunities for feedback are clear and accessible.

Each member of the work group is attempting to make 3-5 personal community contacts. The group is also working to coordinate a follow up Race Matters meeting in December.

Outreach-

Amy Blondin spoke briefly about outreach and communication efforts related to the ELP. She explained that they are looking at it in three phases:

- Pre December 1st: Key Communicators list, draft outcomes and strategies posted online, survey posted online, community meetings around the state.
- December 1st: Will post plan outline and do media outreach including a media webinar on December 1st so that reporters can ask questions.

- Post December 1st: Continued outreach efforts to gather input on the draft plan.

December 1st Recommendations to the Governor-

Sangree Froelicher explained that OSPI, Thrive by Five Washington, and DEL are leading the Drafting Team. More than 25 organizations are represented including and the group includes all of the work group chairs from the ELP Steering Committee. Sangree shared the Near Term Policy Priorities document, explaining that these are the key elements that will be in the report but this is not the actual report. The priorities draw upon the work of the work groups and build upon existing work including Kids Matter and Washington Learns. The priorities also respond to the specific directives in the Governor's request as well as the group's recognition of the importance of addressing the preparation gap.

Sangree also shared the Drafting Team Finance subgroup Policy and Finance Context document. She explained that the charge of this subgroup was to look at existing finance and recommend improvements as well as to do in a revenue hunt in source of possible new financing sources.

Council Discussion:

- Representative Goodman asked why the Near Term Policy Priorities call out 4 year olds specifically. Sangree explained that this is a work in progress and are still clarifying some of these issues.

Council Discussion-

At this time John Howell asked the council if, taken as a whole, the outcomes and strategies presented reflect the creation of a comprehensive system of early learning and if not, what's missing?

- Nina Auerbach commented that she feels the document accurately reflects the various sources of input given. She recommended that the section on birth through 3 year olds mention at risk infants and toddlers being served in licensed care; need to make sure that there are mechanisms to move that forward in step with the rest.
- Amber Havens expressed concern that the document says birth to 3 and the focuses on 4 year olds which leaves a gap for 3 year olds. Sangree explained that this is a typo and that the document should read birth through 3.
- Sue Winn spoke about the need to include support for providers so that they have the resources to support families.
- Lorena Lowell emphasized the difficulties that providers face in light of limited resources.
- Todd McNerney spoke about the importance and value of home visiting.
- Paula Smith pointed out the need to think about the information barriers posed by cities and municipalities who have no knowledge of provider licensing requirements.

John asked for specific feedback from legislators regarding whether or not the document meets their expectations:

- Senator Kauffman responded that yes it does. She spoke about the difficulties in getting this project off the ground due to a variety of factors. The focus on children and families is good.
- Representative Goodman spoke about the need for a system that is not isolated. He also emphasized the need make clear that this is a voluntary system based on parent choice.
- Senator King commented that the document covers the bases of what could be developed into a system of early learning. He posed the possibility of integrating kindergarten with 3 and 4 year olds. He raised the issue of potential negative impacts of degree requirements for family, friend,

and neighbor care providers. Must seriously consider financing as we move forward. He expressed concerns about federal grants as a funding source because they are sometimes of limited duration and therefore not sustainable.

- Representative Goodman echoed Senator King's concerns about the duration of federal grants but also commented that they can provide the opportunity to start a program and show success that builds the will for future funding.
- Senator Kauffman emphasized the need to be realistic about what is truly feasible.
- Senator King commented that he firmly believes that early learning is something we have to do and that it is a great investment but that funding must be balanced with meeting the needs of children already in the k-12 system.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Jacki Haight of the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe spoke about this being a historic day; President Obama is meeting for the first time with the tribal nations. She commented that she feels DEL is attempting to break down barriers with the tribal community and that this is an opportunity to be successful for children and families in our state. She spoke about the need to rethink how we define success and recognize that the degree requirements don't represent the best interest of everyone. She also expressed interest in extending early learning through kindergarten.
- Donna Horne of CCR&R Skagit commented that outcome #25, access to resources, is what the Resource and Referral network does and asked for recognition that they have been doing so on a tight budget and need adequate funding to perform this function.

CLOSING REMARKS

Nina Auerbach shared that she was proud and honored to be a colleague of those present and the plan reflects a great deal of intelligence, work, and commitment. She encouraged anyone who has not yet given feedback to do so.

NEXT MEETING

TBD